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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002421

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: ROYG FORCES KILL REBEL CLERIC AL-HOUTHI IN

SEPTEMBER 10 RAID

REF: SANAA 2225 AND PREVIOUS.

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajewski; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (C) Summary. Anti-American rebel Shi'ite cleric al-Houthi was killed on September 10 in an early morning raid on his cave hide-out in the Sa'da Governorate. The ROYG has announced an end to the 10-week insurgency, which resulted in well over 1000 deaths. ROYG forces have already begun redeployment from the north, although it remains unclear whether or not al-Houthi supporters will regroup. End Summary.

**¶2.** (S/NF) Rebel cleric Hussein Badr Eddine al-Houthi was killed early morning on September 10 near Haidan in the Sa'da Governorate. His death came at the end of a two-day siege conducted by Yemeni Central Security Forces (CSF) on caves defended by al-Houthi supporters near Haidan. A USG-trained CSF Counter Terrorism (CT) team led the operation, resulting in the fatal shooting of al-Houthi and the loss of one member of the CT unit, and two regular CSF. After identification by family members, al-Houthi's body was transported to an undisclosed Army medical facility in Sanaa.

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Saleh Healing Inter-Service Wounds  
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**¶3.** (U) Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh officially congratulated ROYG Military leaders on their victory over forces of rebel cleric Hussein Badr Eddine al-Houthi on September 10, declaring an end to the 10-week long rebellion. In his statement, Saleh commended the Minister of Defense Alaiwa, Minister of Interior al-Alimi, Commander of the Northwest Region Al-Ahmar, Commander of the Air Force Mohamed Saleh, and Central Security Forces (CSF) Chief Yahya Saleh.

**¶4.** (S/NF) The failure of ROYG forces to quickly and decisively end the rebellion when it broke out in June sent shockwaves through the military and security apparatus. During the increasingly bloody conflict, MOD sources reported bitter finger pointing between President Saleh's cousin, al-Ahmar, and his son and Commander of the Special Forces Ahmed Saleh, as well as clashes between the MOD and MOI on field tactics and deployment techniques.

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Premature Redeployment?  
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**¶5.** (S) Anxious to put this painful episode to bed, the ROYG leadership was quick to declare victory. CSF were redeployed to Sana'a on September 11. It will take longer for the 7000 Army troops to redeploy from the north, but efforts are already underway. No fighting was reported since al-Houthi's death, but it may be premature to assume all pockets of al-Houthi supporters will fade back into their surroundings. (Comment: Al-Houthi's religious teachings may not resonate widely with the Yemeni population, but his rebellion may have enjoyed some public support due to anti-Americanism or latent anti-regime sentiment. It is premature to rule out the possibility remnants of al-Houthi supporters could regroup to exploit ROYG weaknesses, or even target western and/or foreign interests should the opportunity arise. End Comment).

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MOI Please, But Downplaying Role of USG CT Assistance  
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**¶6.** (S/NF) Minister of Interior Alimi told DCM that commanders in the field attributed the victory directly to USG CT training. "Had it not been for your training the CSF unit that stormed the cave, we could have suffered more than forty casualties." The evening of September 11, however, DATT was visited in his home by a representative of the Directorate of Military Intelligence who asked that any public credit for ending the long and bloody conflict go to MOD and not MOI. (Comment: It will be interesting to see if Saleh, who has publicly tried to spread his praise, will privately acknowledge the role of U.S. assistance. End Comment).

**¶7.** (S/NF) Other channel reporting confirms a minimum of 135 CSF casualties due to just one incident of friendly fire, indicating severe weaknesses in ROYG forces tactical

coordination and command, control and communication capabilities. (Comment: Future FMF and security-assistance programs should consider addressing these shortcomings in ROYG forces' abilities. End Comment).

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ROYG vulnerabilities revealed  
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18. (S/NF) Although the actual number of dead and wounded soldiers, rebels, and civilians is unknown, Post believes the number to be in the low thousands. ROYG officials complained to Emboffs and senior U.S. officials throughout the conflict that their forces were ill prepared for this fight, asking repeatedly for intelligence and security assistance. President Saleh told visiting A/S for Political Military Affairs Bloomfield that ROYG forces were not properly equipped to defeat al-Houthi, and confided to CENTCOM Commander General Abizaid that the fighting in the north had become unbearable in human, material, and political cost.

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Comment:  
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19. (S) While al-Houthi and his followers may not have had the capability to severely or permanently weaken the regime, the ongoing and costly nature of the conflict demonstrated ROYG vulnerabilities which either remaining al-Houthi supporters or other regime rivals, be they tribal or ideological, may still seek to exploit. Requests made by President Saleh and other senior ROYG officials for U.S. security assistance and intel sharing (reftels) should not be dismissed due to al-Houthi's death. Post recommends these requests be reviewed in the context of U.S. interests in regime stability and increased U.S.-Yemeni cooperation in the GWOT. End Comment.

KRAJESKI